MCPSS Gets Vaccinated
NSPRA Gold Medallion Entry ~ 2022

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Special Communication Project/Campaign

Mobile County Public Schools is a public school system with 53,000 students. During this project, the Office of Communication had three employees and mcpssTV had four.
When Gov. Kay Ivey announced on January 29, 2021, that educators across the state would soon be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, Alabama was in a precarious position. Alabama was leading the nation in COVID deaths per capita. Alabama had the highest positivity rate in the nation. And the state was near the bottom in rankings for the number of people getting vaccinated.

In addition to all of those negative statistics, the community served by Mobile County Public Schools had consistently had some of the state’s highest numbers of COVID-19 cases.

The governor announced that teachers and other school employees could get their first dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine beginning on Feb. 8. As soon as officials with Mobile County Public Schools (MCPSS) – the state’s largest school system – learned of this, we formed the COVID-19 Vaccination Committee and began drawing up a health plan and a communication plan to encourage our employees to receive the vaccine.

We set goals to encourage our employees to get vaccinated and to form partnerships with local health agencies to provide the vaccine. We worked first with our county’s largest hospitals - Mobile Infirmary and USA Health - and eventually with the Mobile County Health Department - and succeeded in vaccinating thousands of employees.

Why was this so important? Because at this point we were almost one year into the pandemic. Students and faculty members who were exposed to the virus had to miss school or work for up to two weeks. Four MCPSS employees had died. If the adults would get vaccinated, they would protect themselves, their co-workers and our students; and we could keep our schools open.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in January 2021:

- The two approved vaccines had been shown in extensive clinical trials to make it substantially less likely that someone who was vaccinated would get COVID-19. (94.1 percent for Moderna and 95 percent for Pfizer).
- Health officials recommended that individuals receive whichever vaccine was available.
- The benefits of receiving the vaccine outweighed the known and potential risks of the vaccine.
Alabama was leading the nation in COVID deaths per capita, with 334 deaths per 100,000 residents. The week of Ivy’s announcement, Alabama broke its own record for daily number of deaths, not once but twice, with 234 deaths on Jan. 26 and 276 on Jan. 27.

Alabama had the highest positivity rate in the nation, at 35 percent. (The next closest state was Iowa at 31 percent.)

Alabama was near the bottom of state rankings for the number of people getting vaccinated. The state at that point had only given out about 42 percent of its doses, with only 5 percent of the population receiving the shot.

About 10 percent of all COVID cases and deaths were in Mobile County, which was labeled as having a “high transmission rate.”

On the same day educators would be eligible for the vaccine, February 8, so would those 65 years and older, and frontline workers including those working for the postal service, grocery stores, in manufacturing, for law enforcement, in the courts, and more. An estimated 2 million residents would now be eligible for vaccination, and Alabama was only receiving 100,000 doses per week, according to ABC News.

With 6,000 full-time employees and about 1,000 part-time employees, MCPSS needed to work quickly to both encourage employees to get vaccinated and to develop partnerships with local healthcare agencies to provide both first and second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

According to our research at the time:

- Alabama was leading the nation in COVID deaths per capita, with 334 deaths per 100,000 residents. The week of Ivy’s announcement, Alabama broke its own record for daily number of deaths, not once but twice, with 234 deaths on Jan. 26 and 276 on Jan. 27.
- Alabama had the highest positivity rate in the nation, at 35 percent. (The next closest state was Iowa at 31 percent.)
- Alabama was near the bottom of state rankings for the number of people getting vaccinated. The state at that point had only given out about 42 percent of its doses, with only 5 percent of the population receiving the shot.
- About 10 percent of all COVID cases and deaths were in Mobile County, which was labeled as having a “high transmission rate.”

And in Mobile County Public Schools:

- In January 2021 alone, 489 students and staff were diagnosed with COVID-19, and hundreds more were placed on quarantine.
- Those testing positive missed a total of about 3,912 days of school or work.
- On advice from the Alabama Department of Education, we were tracking positive cases, not the close-contacts. But if an average of 3 more students or teachers were out for each positive case, that would be another 11,736 days of school or work missed.
- As a result of high absenteeism due to COVID, our schools had to go 100 percent remote the second week of January.

As part of our research, MCPSS:

- Remained in constant contact with the Mobile County Health Department, attending virtual meetings with officials, watching the daily news conferences, and monitoring the community's daily positivity rate for trends.
- Sought guidance from officials from the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Alabama Department of Education on both how to handle COVID-19 cases and quarantines.
- Met with officials from other school districts through organizations such as ALSPRA to learn about steps they were doing to encourage vaccinations.
- Gathered information about the benefits of vaccinations and about any possible side effects of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Monitored media for COVID-19 updates.

Our challenge in vaccinating thousands of employees was two-pronged. Alabama residents, overall, were hesitant to receive the vaccine. And the state supply was low.

Research

MCPSS Gets Vaccinated

Investigation

In January 2021 alone, 489 students and staff were diagnosed with COVID-19, and hundreds more were placed on quarantine. Those testing positive missed a total of about 3,912 days of school or work. On advice from the Alabama Department of Education, we were tracking positive cases, not the close-contacts. But if an average of 3 more students or teachers were out for each positive case, that would be another 11,736 days of school or work missed. As a result of high absenteeism due to COVID, our schools had to go 100 percent remote the second week of January.

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- Gathered information about the benefits of vaccinations and about any possible side effects of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Monitored media for COVID-19 updates.
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, vaccination was the leading public health prevention strategy to end the pandemic. The lower the number of COVID cases, the more likely that students could attend class in person and participate in extracurricular activities, helping them academically, socially and emotionally. Lower COVID rates would result in fewer employee absences. That was important because 1) students learn best from teachers who have strong content knowledge, rather than substitute teachers who may or may not be certified teachers and 2) substitutes were difficult to find.

It was imperative that Mobile County Public Schools do all that we could to lower our COVID-19 numbers, and vaccinating employees was key to doing so. MCPSS formed a COVID-19 Vaccination Committee and set these goals:

**Goal 1:** Mobile County Public Schools will encourage employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

**Measurable Objective:** To achieve and maintain a vaccination rate among our 6,000 full-time employees that is higher than the state average.

**Strategies:**
- Provide #TeamMCPSS facemasks as an incentive for each employee who receives a vaccine;
- To promote the vaccine on social media using the hashtag #MCPSSGetsVaccinated;
- To set the example by having the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and others in leadership publicize their own vaccinations;
- And to email all employees about the vaccine.

**Audience:** MCPSS employees

**Goal 2:** Work with local healthcare agencies to provide the vaccine to all MCPSS employees who wish to receive it.

**Measurable Objective:** Reach out to the Mobile County Health Department, USA Health, and Mobile Infirmary to form partnerships and prioritize our educators to receive the vaccine.

**Strategies:**
- Meet with officials from these three agencies in-person, via Zoom, or over the phone to establish vaccination plans before Feb. 8;
- Communicate vaccination options to employees via email beginning prior to Feb. 8 and continuing throughout March, April, and May;
- And utilize local media, employee newsletters and mcpssTV to promote vaccination opportunities.

**Key public:** MCPSS employees

**Secondary audience:** The families of our 53,000 students. (So they would feel safer about being at school).

The COVID-19 Vaccination Committee included:
- Superintendent Chresal D. Threadgill, who would lead our efforts, stay in contact with state officials and other school systems for best-practices, and meet with health officials about providing the vaccine.
- Deputy Superintendent Dr. Lakesha Brackins, who would directly assist the superintendent with tasks as assigned.
- Director of Communication Rena Philips, who would oversee efforts to communicate our plan with employees.
- Head Nurse Sharon Bailey, a health advisor who would also work with school nurses on the plan.
- Assistant Superintendent Terrence Mixon, who would use his influence and Division of Student Support Services to encourage vaccinations. (He oversees the nurses and many other departments).
- Instructional Technology Coordinator Michele Collier, who would use technology to survey employees and to sign employees up for vaccine appointments.
- mcpssTV Manager Quintin Howard, who would produce videos promoting the project.

**Budget:** $22,000

- Customized cloth facemasks for MCPSS employees who are vaccinated: $14,000
- In-kind services: Sending five nurses to work at Mobile Infirmary six days: $7,500.
- Awards for Mobile Infirmary, USA Health, and the Mobile County Health Department: $300
# MCPSS Gets Vaccinated

## Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Message/Content</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threadgill talks to health agencies to seek providers of vaccine.</td>
<td>Mobile County Health Department, USA Health, Mobile Infirmary</td>
<td>To keep our schools open and our students learning, vaccinations must be prioritized for educators.</td>
<td>Feb. 1 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philips Office of Communication designs social media campaign, facemasks.</td>
<td>MCPSS employees</td>
<td>#MCPSSGetsVaccinated - The vaccine is safe and is the best way for #TeamMCPSS to help end this pandemic.</td>
<td>Feb. 1 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philips utilizes local media to publicize plan.</td>
<td>MCPSS employees, WKRG, WALA, WPMI, al.com, Call News</td>
<td>MCPSS wants its employees to get vaccinated and is providing them with opportunities to do so.</td>
<td>Feb. 1 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collier creates Google Form to schedule employee vaccinations through Mobile Infirmary. Monitors #s.</td>
<td>MCPSS employees</td>
<td>MCPSS is making it easy for you to make your vaccine appointment, so make it today. Promote our partner.</td>
<td>Feb. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services provides nurses for vaccination clinics.</td>
<td>MCPSS employees</td>
<td>To encourage employees, our own nurses will be there giving the vaccine &amp; providing support.</td>
<td>Feb. 8 - 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly emails from Mixon and Philips.</td>
<td>MCPSS employees</td>
<td>The vaccine is safe and effective. Get yours today. (Include FAQs).</td>
<td>Starting the first week of February - end of school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As vaccinations begin, Office of Communication &amp; mcpssTV launch #MCPSSGetsVaccinated</td>
<td>MCPSS employees</td>
<td>We are #TeamMCPSS. Together, we will keep our schools open and our employees and students safe by getting the vaccine.</td>
<td>Feb. 8 - end of school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philips Office of Communication &amp; mcpssTV organize media/social media/mcpssTV blitz</td>
<td>MCPSS employees</td>
<td>MCPSS cares about our employees and wants them to get vaccinated. We are also thankful for our partnerships.</td>
<td>Feb. 4 - end of school year. Local media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, mcpssTV, e-news, Learning Leading magazine, mcpss.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCPSS works with USA Health to promote and hold drive-through vaccination clinic for educators.</td>
<td>MCPSS employees</td>
<td>Email employees about date and time. Encourage them to get vaccinated easily, from their cars, on a Saturday. Thank our partner.</td>
<td>Feb. 13 - first dose. March 13 - second dose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Communication continues to publicize vaccination opportunities at Mobile Infirmary.</td>
<td>MCPSS employees</td>
<td>Through email, social media &amp; mcpssTV, MCPSS shows that employees are excited to get the vaccine and provides information about how to get the vaccine.</td>
<td>Feb. 15 - end of school year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**MCPSS Gets Vaccinated**

**Implementation**

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<tr>
<td>Philips and Bailey work with Mobile County Health Department to operate vaccine clinics in our schools.</td>
<td>With more people now eligible for vaccine, MCPSS employees &amp; our families &amp; community</td>
<td>Let's get vaccinated, end this pandemic, and keep our students and employees in school. Publicize via social media, emails. (Media covers most of the clinics.)</td>
<td>Mid-March - May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribute 5,000 #TeamMCPSS facemasks to schools and departments.</td>
<td>MCPSS employees</td>
<td>Getting vaccinated makes you a team player.</td>
<td>First week in March (as soon as they arrived),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and department heads survey employees about vaccination status.</td>
<td>MCPSS employees</td>
<td>We want to know: Have you been vaccinated? If so, do you have your #TeamMCPSS facemask?</td>
<td>Mid- to Late- March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Mobile Infirmary, USA Health &amp; Mobile County Health Department for partnerships at the district’s (virtual) Learning Leading Awards.</td>
<td>Our partners</td>
<td>Thank you for prioritizing educators and education. mcpssTV films the awards show to run on Facebook “LIVE” virtually as well as on the district’s 24-hour channel. Office of Communication sends news release about award winners to local media.</td>
<td>May 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to host Health Department clinics at schools throughout the county and promote them.</td>
<td>Employees &amp; families &amp; community. Offer clinics in areas targeted by the Health Department, including inner-city and rural schools.</td>
<td>Email employees and our families and publicize via social media to encourage more people to get the vaccine. It’s convenient &amp; safe. Help Health Department advertise that children 12 and older may now get vaccine.</td>
<td>All summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey employees about vaccination status.</td>
<td>MCPSS employees</td>
<td>How did we do?</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Our biggest challenge & need for adjustment:**

Employees with jobs requiring college degrees (including teachers and other “certified” employees) were more likely to be vaccinated than “classified” employees (support personnel).

Only 10 percent – or 65 of approximately 650 bus drivers - were vaccinated in April. For that reason, we worked with USA Health to set up clinics at our five transportation hubs to vaccinate bus drivers, and we distributed information about the safety and benefits of being vaccinated to our bus drivers. Though participation was low – we only vaccinated 58 bus drivers during five clinics – it did nearly double the percentage of vaccinated bus drivers.
MCPSS Gets Vaccinated Evaluation

We measured our efforts twice during the campaign. Both times, MCPSS had higher vaccination rates than the state. We also formed successful partnerships to provide options for our employees to be vaccinated: either by appointment at Mobile Infirmary; at two separate, day-long drive-through clinics sponsored by USA Health; at our five transportation hubs; and at 24 school-based clinics run by the Mobile County Health Department.

About 1,500 employees set up appointments through the Google Form we created for Mobile Infirmary. And about 600 reserved a timeslot for USA Health's drive-through clinic. Some utilized other healthcare providers.

In May, we asked each school principal and department chair to report how many of their employees had been vaccinated. Forty-one percent of our full-time employees had received at least one dose, which was higher than Alabama's average of 30 percent, according to al.com.

In September, we emailed a follow-up survey to our full-time employees. Of the 3,300 who responded: 72 percent were fully vaccinated, and 2 percent had received one dose. The state vaccination level by then was 51 percent. Factoring that into the 2,700 employees who did not respond, we estimate that our actual number of full-time employees receiving at least one dose would be closer to 63 percent.

In addition, we received very positive feedback from our three partners, as our goals aligned with theirs to vaccinate as many Mobile County residents as they could and to reduce the number of COVID-19 cases. The two hospitals and the Health Department were delighted when we recognized them during our Learning Leading Awards and promoted their awards in company newsletters and on their own social media accounts.

We received positive coverage on our vaccination efforts on all three local news channels, al.com, social media, and via our own channel, mcpssTV. We stayed within our $22,000 budget. And we have no doubt that lives were saved as a result of our high vaccination rate, compared to Alabama’s.

MCPSS: 63% VACCINATED

ALABAMA: 51% VACCINATED

MCPSS COVID CASES THE MONTH BEFORE VACCINES WERE AVAILABLE:
- JANUARY: 489

AND THE MONTHS AFTER:
- MARCH: 102
- APRIL: 40
- MAY: 32
MCPSS Gets Vaccinated
Support Materials

We were working on a tight timeline. Though we rush-ordered the masks, they were not delivered by February 8, when school employees could receive their vaccine. So we created this sign and emailed it to employees to use to post on social media with our hashtag #MCPSSGetsVaccinated.

Here is the mask we designed. (We were optimistic and ordered 5,000 of them. We distributed them to all 90 of our schools and all central office department to give to their employees as they were vaccinated). #TeamMCPSS has been a popular slogan of ours, so Superintendent Threadgill wanted our masks to carry that theme.
MCPSS Gets Vaccinated
Support Materials

We posted this photo of our nurses on the district’s Facebook page, which has more than 50,000 followers, on the first day of vaccinations.
Support Materials

MCPSS Gets Vaccinated

We posted a video created by our own mcpssTV on Facebook and Twitter of our nurses administering the vaccine to employees and interviews from Director of Communication Rena Philips, Head Nurse Sharon Bailey, and Mobile Infirmary officials stressing the importance of vaccination. Both Fox-10 and NBC-15 came to the Infirmary to do stories. We sent our video to WKRG-5, which ran it during the evening and next morning’s broadcasts. The video is available here: [223] MCPSS COVID Shots - YouTube

We also utilized mcpssTV and our local media contacts to promote the two drive-through clinics hosted by USA Health.
Besides continuing to email employees weekly about opportunities to get vaccinated, we publicized our efforts internally on mcpss.com and in our e-news that goes out to all employees as well as business and community partners. We also promoted the vaccination efforts in our thrice yearly “Learning Today. Leading Tomorrow” magazine. We print 30,000 copies of the magazine and distribute it via the Citronelle Call News and Lagniappe newspapers.
MCPSS Gets Vaccinated

Support Materials

We posted this when Superintendent Threadgill was vaccinated. mcpssTV also filmed video of him getting the vaccine that we sent to local media and that ran on WKRG-5 and NBC-15:

(223) MCPSS Covid Shots Update - YouTube

TracyfromAL. 😊 @tracyfromAL - Feb 11, 2021
#MCPSSGetsVaccinated

The ESC is good to go!

MobilePublicSchools @MobilePublicSch · Mar 1, 2021
MCPSS employees who received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine should be receiving these facemasks as they prepare to start getting their second doses this week. Share your own #WeveGotThis photos!
#LearningLeading #MCPSSGetsVaccinated
MCPSS Gets Vaccinated
Support Materials

TOP STORIES

Mobile County Schools partnering with two hospitals for COVID-19 vaccinations for employees

MOBILE, Ala. (WREG) — Mobile County Public Schools is partnering with Mobile Infirmary and USA Health to vaccinate employees.

Samples of media coverage
MCPSS Gets Vaccinated

Support Materials

After we identified that only 10 percent of our bus drivers were vaccinated, we partnered with USA Health to offer clinics at all five transportation hubs. We sent the bus drivers a letter from Superintendent Threadgill encouraging them to get vaccinated, as well as a Q&A with common questions we had heard. Here are examples of our social media posts from that effort:
To show appreciation to our partners – Mobile Infirmary, USA Health and the Mobile County Health Department – we recognized them during our annual Learning Leading Awards Ceremony. Held “virtually” due to COVID-19, representatives from the three agencies were excited to accept their award. mcpssTV filmed the awards, which also honor our Teachers of the Year and top students. We ran the full show on Facebook and our 24-hour channel. And we ran pictures of the award-winners on social media and in our “Learning Today. Leading Tomorrow” magazine. All three agencies promoted their award on their own social media accounts and employee newsletters. Here is a link to the broadcast:
(223) Learning Leading Awards Show 2021 - YouTube
MCPSS Gets Vaccinated
Support Materials

After our initial partnerships with Mobile Infirmary and USA Health, the Mobile County Health Department began hosting vaccine clinics at several of our schools for employees and the general public. (12 schools x 2 clinics apiece = 24 clinics). For each clinic, we emailed the employees and our families of that school and nearby schools to let them know when and where they could be vaccinated. mcpssTV interviewed the Mobile County Health Department about the importance of getting vaccinated.
Here is the first email we sent to employees about opportunities to get vaccinated. We sent reminders at least once a week through mid-April. We attached a Q&A about the vaccine to the initial and second email, which is also included below.

Mixon, Terrence/Student Support Services  
Wed 2/3/2021 2:20 PM

Dear MCPSS Employees,

I would like to share some exciting news with you on behalf of Mr. Threadgill. Mobile County Public Schools is partnering with Mobile Infirmary and USA Health to offer COVID-19 vaccinations for our employees. This is in recognition of the important work that each of you do for our students as frontline workers every day. Mobile Infirmary is scheduling appointments for MCPSS employees to be vaccinated daily at the hospital starting on Monday, February 8. USA Health is allowing MCPSS employees to receive vaccines at a drive-through clinic at the Mobile Civic Center on Saturday, February 13.

Please complete this survey to let us know if you are interested in receiving the vaccine and which provider you would prefer: https://forms.gle/KVk4qoQpKTRFjkug9

If you reply “yes,” you will receive a follow-up email with instructions.

Both Mobile Infirmary and USA Health are currently offering the Pfizer vaccine, which is to be administered twice, at least 21 days apart. Getting the vaccine is 100 percent voluntary, but we are highly encouraging it. Health officials recommend that as many people as possible get the vaccine so that as a society we can develop herd immunity, slow the spread of COVID-19, and eventually stop the pandemic.

Besides these two options, employees are welcome to sign up to receive the vaccine from the healthcare provider of their choice as supply is available.

We would like to thank Gov. Kay Ivey and State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris for announcing last week that teachers and school support staff are eligible to receive the vaccine. And we would like to thank Mobile Infirmary and USA Health for prioritizing us as educators through these partnerships.

We have attached to this email a list of answers to questions you may have. To get everything scheduled, the survey in the link will need to be completed no later than tomorrow, Thursday, February 4, 2021 by 5:00 PM. After this time, the form will be inactive. Also the form is internal and all employees must sign in to their MCPSS google account (district email & password).

Thank you.
Terrence Mixon,  
Assistant Superintendent/Student Support Services
Mobile County Public Schools

Frequently Asked Questions about the COVID-19 vaccine

1. When can MCPSS employees get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Mobile County Public Schools is partnering with Mobile Infirmary and USA Health to provide vaccines for as many of our employees who wish to receive vaccinations. Please visit the link provided in this email to complete a survey asking if you would like to receive a vaccine and which provider you prefer. If you say “yes,” you will get a follow-up email with additional information and instructions based on which provider you selected.

2. What is the vaccination plan through Mobile Infirmary?

Mobile Infirmary is setting up appointments daily for MCPSS employees at the hospital starting on Monday, February 8. If you choose Mobile Infirmary as your option, you will receive a follow-up email including a Google Form and medical paperwork to complete as soon as possible. Next, you will receive an appointment date and time to receive your first dose. While at Mobile Infirmary, you will set the appointment for your second dose.

3. What is the vaccination plan through USA Health?

MCPSS employees will be able to receive vaccinations as part of a USA Health drive-through clinic at the Mobile Civic Center on Saturday, February 13. While there, you will set the appointment for your second dose. Those who choose this option will get more information closer to that date.

4. Am I required to get the vaccine?

Getting the vaccine is 100 percent voluntary, and it is highly encouraged. Health officials recommend that as many people as possible get the vaccine so that as a society we can develop herd immunity, slow the spread of COVID-19, and eventually stop the pandemic.

5. If I want the vaccine, do I have to pick one of these two options?

Employees are welcome to receive the vaccine from any healthcare provider of their choice as supplies become available. MCPSS is partnering with Mobile Infirmary and USA Health in an effort to get as many of our employees vaccinated as quickly as possible.

6. Is the vaccine going to be available for all school employees or just teachers?

Gov. Kay Ivey and State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris announced that teachers and all school support staff will be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine starting on Feb. 8. These initiatives with Mobile Infirmary and USA Health are available to all MCPSS employees.

7. Should I get the COVID-19 vaccination?

Health officials agree that widespread vaccination is among the best tools for stopping the pandemic (along with wearing masks and social distancing). We understand that some people may be concerned about getting vaccinated. According to the CDC: All COVID-19 vaccines that have been approved have been shown in extensive clinical trials to make it substantially less likely that you will get COVID-19, and that the benefits of receiving the vaccine outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine. Even if you get COVID-19, getting the vaccine may help you from getting seriously ill. Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, particularly those who are at extreme risk.
8. How many shots of COVID-19 vaccine will be needed?

There are two currently authorized vaccines to prevent COVID-19 in the United States, and both require two shots to get the most protection. The Pfizer-BioNTech doses should be given at least 21 days apart. The Moderna doses should be given at least 28 days apart. You should get your second shot as close to the recommended interval as possible, and not earlier. The CDC’s website has detailed information on both vaccines.

9. Which vaccine will we get?

Mobile Infirmary and USA Health are currently offering the Pfizer vaccine.

10. What should I expect after getting the vaccine?

You may have some side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection. Health officials agree that the benefits of receiving the vaccine outweigh the risks and side effects. Common side effects include: Pain and/or swelling on the arm where you receive the shot, fever, chills, tiredness, and/or headache. These side effects may affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. To reduce pain and discomfort from the vaccine: Drink plenty of fluids, talk to your doctor about taking an over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, and exercise or use the arm that received the vaccination. Health experts recommend that you get the second shot even if you have side effects after the first shot, unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you not to get the second shot.

11. Can a COVID-19 vaccine make me sick with COVID-19?

No. According to the CDC, none of the current COVID-19 vaccines contain the live virus that causes COVID-19 so a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19.

12. How effective are the vaccines?

According to the CDC, the Moderna vaccine and the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine are 94.1 and 95 percent effective, respectively, at preventing laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 illness in people without evidence of previous infection. Health officials recommend that you get whichever of these vaccines is available to you. You can visit the CDC’s website for additional information about the clinical trials and effectiveness of these vaccines.

13. Is it safe for me to get a vaccine if I have an underlying medical condition?

Vaccination is an important consideration for adults of any age with certain underlying medical conditions because they are at increased risk for severe illness if they were to catch the virus that causes COVID-19. According to the CDC, People with underlying medical conditions can receive the FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines provided they have not had an immediate or severe allergic reaction to a previously administered COVID-19 vaccine or to any of the ingredients in the vaccine. A list of the ingredients is available on the CDC’s website. If you have any question or concerns, please talk to your doctor.

14. Is there a charge for getting the vaccine?

Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. However, vaccination providers may charge administration fees for giving the shot that can be reimbursed by the patient’s insurance.